

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

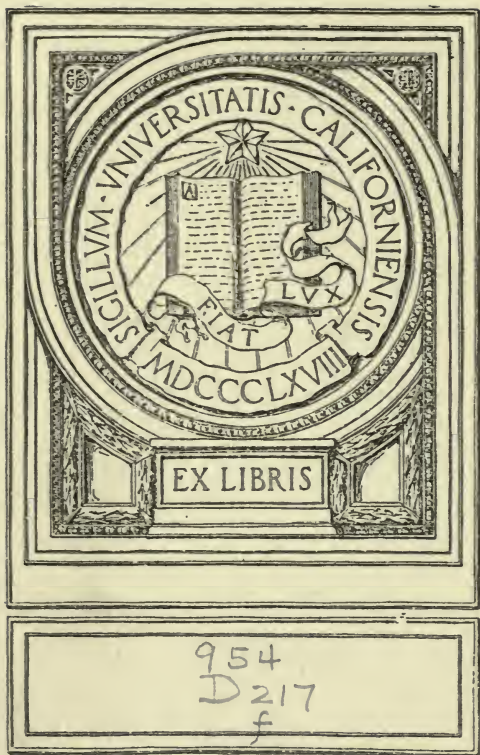
OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN
AND
FREDERICK PETERSON

UC-NRLF



5B 249 956

YB 74616

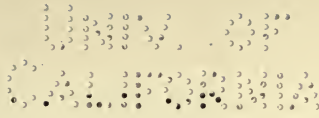


EX LIBRIS

954
D 217
f



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



THE FLUTTER
OF THE GOLDLEAF
AND OTHER PLAYS

THE FLUTTER
OF THE GOLDLEAF

AND OTHER PLAYS

BY
OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN
AND
FREDERICK PETERSON

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1922

TO THE
LIBRARY OF THE
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

PRINTED AT
THE SCRIBNER PRESS
NEW YORK, U. S. A.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF	I
BY OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN AND FREDERICK PETERSON	
THE JOURNEY	49
BY OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN	
EVERYCHILD	75
BY FREDERICK PETERSON AND OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN	
TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS	103
BY FREDERICK PETERSON	

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

AND

FREDERICK PETERSON

CHARACTERS

PHILO WARNER, *a student*

HIRAM WARNER, *his father, the village grocer*

MARY ANN WARNER, *his mother*

DR. BELLOWS, *the village physician*

DR. SEYMOUR, *a city specialist*

REBA SLOAN, *a neighbor's daughter*

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

SCENE: *Laboratory in the attic of the Warner cottage. At right, toward rear, entrance from down-stairs. A rude partition, left, with door in centre. Window centre rear. Large kitchen table loaded with apparatus. Shelves, similarly loaded, against wall near table, right. Wires strung about. A rude couch, bench, and several wooden chairs.*

Time, about 8 p. m. Lamp burns on table. MRS. WARNER comes up-stairs, puts her head inside the room nervously, then enters and looks about.

Mrs. W.

Such a mess! And the doctors will be here in half an hour! (*Tries to get busy but seems bothered. Crosses to table and looks at a little machine that stands upon it.*) That's what's driving my boy crazy! If I only dared to smash it! The right sort of a mother would do just that! (*Looks at machine with dire meditation.*)

Warner (without, roaring up the stairs)

Mary Ann!

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Mrs. W. (jumps)

Yes, Hiram!

Warner (entering)

Where's Philo?

Mrs. W.

In the orchard. I watched my chance, and thought I'd redd up a little. He won't let me touch anything when he's here.

Warner

Just about lives up here, don't he?

Mrs. W.

Day and night now, since he's been too sick to go to the store. And I can't have Dr. Bellows bring in that specialist from New York with things lookin' as if a woman had never come up the stairs. (*Dusting and rattling.*)

Warner

Philo's not onto what the doctors are after, is he?

Mrs. W.

He thinks they're coming to look at his machine mostly—and see what's keepin' him awake nights. But maybe he knows. He's awful sharp.

Warner

Sharp? Wish he knew enough to sell eggs and bacon. He's ruinin' my business. Weighs a

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

pound of coffee as if he was asleep. I can see customers watchin' him out o' the tail o' their eye. They're gettin' *afraid* of him! Mary Ann, the boy's going to be a shame to us. He's crazy!

Mrs. W.

Don't you call *my* boy crazy. I won't hear it, Hiram.

Warner

No, you'll wait till the whole village tells you! They're all talkin' now!

Mrs. W.

It's none o' their business!

Warner

It'll be their business if he flies up and hurts somebody.

Mrs. W.

Philo wouldn't hurt anything alive. He got mad at me once for killin' a spider.

Warner (scornfully)

Showed his sense there, didn't he?

Mrs. W.

If Philo's queer it's not from my side of the house. You know what your mother was like—wanderin' round nights starin' at the stars with that old spy-glass Captain Barker gave her.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Warner

She was a good mother, all the same.

Mrs. W.

Couldn't cook at all. Your father only kept alive by eating at the neighbors occasionally—and as for sewing and mending, you children went in rags till your Aunt Sary came to live with you.

Warner

Mother thought a heap of us, though. I remember how she cried because I wouldn't go to school and went into the grocery business. And she cried a lot more when I married you. I couldn't understand her—*then*.

Mrs. W.

Humph! She'd been shut up fast enough if your father hadn't been the softest-hearted man alive.

Warner

Maybe the boy does take after her, but he's worse'n she ever was.

Mrs. W.

She didn't have any books—or college education—to turn her head.

Warner

Nothing to read but the *Weekly Mirror*. It was a good paper, though, all about crops and stock,

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

and what the country people were doing, and a love story on the inside page. Father subscribed on her account. She told him her mind had to have *something* to work on. But she didn't take to the paper, and he had to read it himself to get his money's worth.

Mrs. W.

A good thing she didn't have a library to get at like Philo. All those books he brought home didn't do him any good. He began to get queer about the time he was reading that set of Sir Humphry Davy's Complete Works, with so much about electrics and the stars, and that sort of stuff. If we could only get him to quit this studyin' and stay out-o'-doors.

Warner

S'pose we clear out this hole—burn the books, and get rid of all these confounded wires and jars and fixings. I don't believe he saves a penny of the wages I give him for helpin' to ruin me. All he makes goes for this truck. We'll clear it out.

Mrs. W.

I've thought of that, but we oughtn't to go too far. They're his anyhow, and I'm afraid—

Warner

Well, I'm not afraid! And I'll begin with this

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

devil! (*Pauses over machine. Starts suddenly.*)
What's that? He's coming!

Mrs. W. (listening)

It's only Alice going to her room.

Warner

Perhaps we'd better see what the specialist says first.

Mrs. W.

I know Dr. Bellows wants us to send Philo away. But I'm against that, first and last.

Warner

You wouldn't be if you'd listen to Bellows awhile. You know what he told me when I met him this morning? "Why, Warner," he says, "I never go to see the boy without taking a pair of handcuffs in my pocket. It's the quiet ones that go the wildest when they do break out."

Mrs. W.

Oh, Hiram, it's not going to be so bad as that. Don't let him set you against your own flesh and blood. Just let me manage awhile. He needs to get stirred up about something—get his mind off this. I wish I hadn't stopped those letters he was getting from Reba Sloan when she went off to school two years ago.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Warner

But you said you'd rather see him dead than married to Sloan's girl.

Mrs. W.

I meant it, too! But seeing your child dead is not so bad as seeing him crazy—and if Reba can save him——

Warner

How in thunder——

Mrs. W.

She's a taking girl, Hiram—since she got back. If Philo gets his mind fixed on *her*, she'll soon have him forgettin' this. Why, you remember for three months before we were married you couldn't think o' nothing but me.

Warner

Good Lord! Is that so, Mary Ann?

Mrs. W.

I had to hurry up the weddin' to save your business. You were letting Jabe McKenny take all your trade right under your nose.

Warner

Sakes 'a' mighty! If I could come out of a spell like that, there's some hope for our poor chap.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Mrs. W.

That's what I'm telling you!

Warner

But Reba's father—you going to have old fiddler Sloan in the family?

Mrs. W.

He's come into some money now, and any gentleman can take an interest in music.

Warner

And the mother was that foreign woman.

Mrs. W.

But she's dead. It's just as well Philo won't have a mother-in-law.

Warner

Reba'll have one, all right. If Philo stays queer it'll be hard on the girl, won't it?

Mrs. W.

He'll not stay queer. If he gets that girl in his head there won't be room for anything else—for a while anyway. He'll be worse'n you ever was. You let me manage it, Hiram.

(PHILO is heard coming up the stairs. They listen in silence until he enters. He is talking, not quite audibly, to himself, and doesn't see them. Goes to table and stands by machine.)

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Philo

Here—at last—I have caught the word
the word of the stars.

Mrs. W.

Philo!

Philo (looking up)

Mother! . . . Father! . . . (*In alarm.*) You
haven't touched anything here?

Mrs. W.

No, my son. I've just put the place to rights
a bit. Dr. Seymour is coming, you know.

Philo

Yes. (*Walks the floor, meditating.*)

Warner

You must come out of this dream, Philo.

Philo

It is not a dream! I am the only being in the
world who is awake!

Mrs. W.

My son!

Philo

Man sleeps—like the rocks, trees, hills—while
all around him, out of the unseen, beating on blind
eyes, deaf ears, numbed brain, sweep the winds of
eternity, the ether waves, the signals from the
depths of space!

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Warner

Hey, diddle, diddle!

Philo

Sleep-walkers all—the people in the streets, the shops—the mad people with their heaps of gold!

Mrs. W.

Now don't work yourself up, Philo, with the doctor coming. You want to tell him about your machine.

Philo

Yes. He is a great man. He has studied these things. I will talk to him. He will not laugh.

Warner

Mary Ann, don't you think we'd better bring up some cider? It'll look more hospitable like.

Mrs. W.

That city doctor won't care anything about cider.

Warner

My cider's good enough for anybody! And Dr. Bellows'll be sure to ask for it.

Mrs. W.

Well, wait till he does. (*Looks uneasily about room.*) Don't you think, son, that if you're going to take to having visitors here I'd better

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

move some furniture up? You could have the haircloth sofa—the springs are broke anyway—and Alice says she don't want the wax flowers in the parlor any more. They're turnin' yellow, but you wouldn't notice it up here.

Philo (clutching his hands)

Do what you like, mother, only don't take anything *out*. If anything happened to my work I believe I'd go crazy!

(The parents look at each other.)

Warner

Thought your work was tendin' the store.

Philo

Brother Will is more help there than I am, father.

Warner

You're right about that. Will's got a head on.

Mrs. W.

You'd better go down, Hiram, and meet the doctors.

Warner

Alice'll show them up.

Mrs. W.

Where's that strange smell comin' from? Do you work in the other room, too, Philo? *(Goes in, left.)*

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Philo

Father . . . I'm sorry about the store . . .
I wish I could tell you . . . but what's the use?
You won't believe!

(*Re-enter* MRS. W.)

Mrs. W.

Gracious! I couldn't breathe in there! Got
to clear *something* out before Reba comes up here.
She'd have no respect for my housekeeping.

Philo

Reba?

Mrs. W.

Reba Sloan. She's been asking if she couldn't
come. She's just wild to see your machine.

Philo

Don't you ever let her up here, mother!

Mrs. W.

But she asked me, Philo—and a neighbor's
daughter, you know——

Philo

I thought she was away from home.

Mrs. W.

Been back a month—walks all about right under
your eyes. You ought to be *civil*, Philo.

Philo

I want to see Dr. Seymour. I should like to

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

have him know what I'm doing. But if you're going to turn the whole village in here, I'll bar the door, that's all.

Mrs. W.

My son, if you'd only interest yourself a little——

Philo

I'm not interested in anything nearer than thirty-five million miles!

Warner

What did I tell you, Mary Ann?

Mrs. W.

I hear the doctors! Now, Philo, if you can't talk sense, don't say *anything*.

(*Enter SEYMOUR and BELLWS.*)

Bellows

Good evening, Warner. How d' do, Mrs. Warner! My friend, Dr. Seymour.

Warner and Mrs. W.

How do you do, sir!

Bellows

Philo, I've brought Dr. Seymour around to have a talk with you. He's down from New York for a day or two. Been sleeping any better?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

Philo

Too much. I need all my time. I'm very glad to see you, Dr. Seymour.

(All take seats.)

Mrs. W.

I hope you'll excuse the looks of the room, doctor.

Seymour

It looks very interesting indeed to me, Mrs. Warner. The workshop of a student, and a busy one. *(To PHILO.)* You've been working too hard, I see.

Philo

I'm tired, perhaps, but I am well. When a man makes a momentous discovery he is apt to be overwrought. He may not eat or sleep well for a time. He may even appear to be strange or mad.

(MRS. W. coughs suddenly.)

Mrs. W.

I'm afraid that's not a comfortable chair, Dr. Seymour.

Seymour

Quite comfortable, Mrs. Warner.

Mrs. W. (rapidly)

Philo is my oldest boy, and I never could keep

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

him away from books. Will, my second son, is as steady in the store as his father himself, and Johnny is just fine on the wagon. As for Alice, there's not a neater all-round girl to be found anywhere. They're healthy, sensible children, every one of 'em, and don't care what's inside any book in the world—but Philo was just bent on going to college——

Seymour

A very natural bent for an ambitious boy.

Bellows

Tell us about the discovery, Philo, my lad.

Philo (rising and walking slowly up and down the room)

I think I will. It will be another experiment. I know what the effect will be on Dr. Bellows. He is an old friend of mine—but you, sir, are a stranger. I should like to try your mind and see if you are awake or asleep.

(BELLWS winks toward SEYMOUR, who takes no notice, but gives PHILO careful attention.)

Seymour

I hope I shall not disappoint you.

Philo

I believe we have some points of view in common, for your profession needs to take note of

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

many problems connected with both evolution and electricity. I have been a reader of general science for many years. The fact that on the earth we have had a slow evolution from a monad to a man contains a promise of further development of man into—let us say an angel.

Bellows

Not very soon, I guess.

Philo (sharply)

Hardly in your day, doctor. You needn't worry about the fashion in wing-feathers.

Seymour

Go on, Mr. Warner.

Philo

In others of the many millions of globes about us in space, a similar evolution is going on, and in some the evolution is less advanced than in ours, in others incomparably more advanced.

Seymour

We may admit that.

(BELLOWS *looks to* WARNER *for sympathy, and shakes his head.*)

Philo

We have reached a stage when we have begun to peer out into the stellar depths and question them. We are beginning to master the light and

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

the lightning, to measure the vastness of space, to weigh the suns, to determine the elements that comprise them, to talk and send messages thousands of miles without wires. Each year uncovers new wonders, infinitely minute, infinitely great.

Seymour

True,—all true.

*Philo (becoming more repressed and tensely
excited as he goes on)*

The dreams of the alchemists are being realized. That machine yonder detects the waves from a millionth of a millionth of a milligramme of radium.

Seymour

What!

Philo

I have invented a tuned electroscope that would be destroyed by such waves, so sensitive as to react only to waves from an inconceivable distance, beyond thirty-five million miles.

Seymour (trying to take it in)

Thirty-five million miles!

Philo (with great tension)

Three weeks ago I made this instrument, and ever since then, at regular intervals, there have

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

been rhythmic flutterings of the goldleaf, regular repetitions, as if it were knocking at the door of earth from the eternal silences. I have watched it—the same measured fluttering—two beats—then three—then two—then four and a pause! It is a studied measure! It has meaning! When I first noticed it—the faint flutter of the goldleaf—and knew that any waves from a nearer point than thirty-five million miles would utterly destroy so delicate an instrument—my hair stood on end. I have watched it three weeks—alone—and you ask me why I do not sleep! . . . Look!

(The doctors spring up electrified, and stare at the instrument.)

Philo

There it is again! Two beats—then three—then two—then four—now it is over!

(SEYMOUR continues to stare at the instrument.

BELLOWS subsides into a chair, looking foolish.)

Seymour (to himself)

Impossible! . . . *(To PHILO.)* What was it you were saying? What did you see?

Philo

I saw what you saw—signals from a distance

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

farther than the distance of the nearest planet to our earth.

Seymour (shaken)

But I saw nothing. At least a slight movement in anything so sensitive might be due to many causes. . . .

Philo

Yes! It is always the old story. Truths must be hammered into humanity! Branded in with flame, or driven in with sword and bullet!

Bellows (starting up alarmed)

Hadn't we better be going, doctor?

Philo

Oh, no! Wait till you've talked me over. Decide whether I'm mad or not! If I'm a menace to the community! If I must be locked up! My father and mother are waiting to know. Don't go! Finish your work! (*Rushes into room, left.*)

Bellows (triumphantly to SEYMOUR)

Well?

(*SEYMOUR hesitates, looks at the father and mother, then at BELLWS, and takes out his match-case.*)

Bellows (making a conquest of the obvious)

Warner, a little of that fine cider of yours would just finish off our chat.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Warner

Nothing better! (*Starting out, whispers to Mrs. W.*) Where's grandma's silver pitcher?

Mrs. W.

I'll get *that*.

(*They go down-stairs.*)

Bellows (laughing)

She never lets him go to the cellar by himself.

Seymour

Not a drinker, is he?

Bellows

Oh, no! The pattern of a deacon. But she keeps her hand on.

(SEYMOUR *lights a cigar thoughtfully.*)

Bellows

No use to go over this case. It's clear enough. We'll have our cider—it's worth waiting for—then go to my office and fix up the commitment papers.

Seymour (rubbing his hand slowly over his forehead)

To talk with such a patient sometimes bewilders the brain. He seemed so clear in his utterance—so rational——

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Bellows

Funny, wasn't he? I almost believed it myself for a minute.

Seymour

It might be true.

Bellows

Hey?

Seymour

Perhaps we are all somnambulists moving about in this dream-world we call practical life. Behind this tough matter that takes so many shapes and colors, what strange secrets are hidden, just beginning to reach our dull senses—X-rays, radium emanations, wireless waves.

Bellows

Oh, they're natural enough now. Common sense has adopted them.

Seymour

Yes, we are easily satisfied. Give a mystery a name and that's enough for the most of us. But here and there are minds that must explore further; and if they discover something beyond the comprehension of us who stay behind, we call them mad.

Bellows

Well, none of your mind-puzzles for me. Give

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

me something clear cut, like typhoid, or measles, an amputation, or new babies, something I can fix my eyes on. You can take care of the madmen—except when they're in my own village. I'm not going to have a boy like Philo gibbering around ready to break out wild any time.

Seymour

It's true he may be led into frenzy, or even self-destruction, but it will be from overwork and loneliness. I must have a talk with the parents——

Bellows

What do you expect *them* to do? They're asking us for help. And *I'm* willing to give it to them.

(Re-enter WARNER and MRS. W. He carries pitcher, she carries tray with glasses.)

Seymour (to BELLOWS)

We'll see. As I say, the boy has been losing sleep, and giving his mind no rest.

Mrs. W. (holding tray while WARNER pours cider)

Just what I say, doctor. He's studied himself sick.

Seymour

You must get him out of here, Mrs. Warner. *(Sipping cider.)* Excellent, indeed!

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Mrs. W.

I'm doing my best.

*Warner (to BELLOWS, who has drained his
glass)*

You're at home, doctor. Just help yourself.
(*He does.*)

Seymour

What is his age?

Mrs. W.

Twenty. He went early to college.

Seymour (musingly)

The usual age. Twenty. (*Sighs.*) The age of visions and enchantments. "The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Bellows

What are you saying, doctor?

Seymour

Just thinking. It's a healthy family, isn't it?

Mrs. W.

I should say! Why, Will and Johnny and Alice——

Bellows

Best sort. The thoroughbreds of the town. Temperate, thriving, regular at church. Warner here was once county supervisor. (*Clapping him on shoulder.*) Never had a better one.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Seymour (to WARNER)

And your parents?

Warner

Father was a sound, practical man. Stood flat-footed, I may say.

Seymour

And your mother?

Mrs. W.

Law me, Hiram Warner thinks there was never anybody in the world like his mother. And there never *was*!

Seymour

That's good to build on. It is clear that your boy is ill, and the burden of his knowledge, whether truth or delusion, is far too great for him to bear. If you could interest him for even a brief time in ordinary life—(*smiling*) miracles that are too common to be disturbing—throw him with young people——

Bellows

You don't mean you won't sign the commitment papers!

Seymour

Just that. I shall not sign them.

Mrs. W. (gratefully)

Oh, doctor!

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Bellows

After what you saw here with your own eyes?
He's completely gone off!

Seymour

The boy may be right. Under this tiny consciousness of ours lie vast fields of subconscious intelligence as yet unexplored. Beyond our earth are still greater mysteries, unimaginable, unthinkable.

Bellows (in disgust)

And I counted on your common sense!

Seymour

Common sense is itself too frail and uncertain a thing to be a criterion of sanity. The common sense of yesterday is to-day's folly, and our present common sense will be the madness of to-morrow.

Bellows

Well, I'll be— I'll wait for you down-stairs, doctor. (*Exit.*)

Seymour

The lad ought not to be in there alone. (*Goes to door.*) Philo, my boy!

(*PHILO comes out. He is extremely pale, his black hair pushed from his forehead, and his eyes burning, but his manner is calm.*)

Philo

Well, am I a free man?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Seymour

You are free, Philo.

Philo (perfunctorily)

Thank you, doctor.

Seymour

But you must have rest from this work. These subjects are too overwhelming for a sane brain to carry without harm. This attic is gloomy and the atmosphere unhealthy. You must have a complete change.

Philo

I see. That is your answer to my discovery. (*Turns suddenly to WARNER.*) And what do you think of it, father?

Warner

I don't seem to get hold of it, somehow, Philo. (*Crosses to machine and stares at it.*) What's the good, anyhow? They're too far away. 'Twouldn't help business.

(*PHILO gives a queer laugh. WARNER opens door.*)

Warner

I'll see you down-stairs, doctor. (*Exit.*)

Philo (turning to MRS. W.)

And you, mother?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Mrs. W. (bustling up and gathering tray and glasses)

I've got to set my bread. (*Crosses to machine and stares at it, holding tray.*) What'll we come to if folks in the stars begin pesterin'? We've got enough to 'tend to right here. (*Goes out muttering.*) Got to set my bread.

(SEYMOUR and PHILO look at each other and smile.)

Seymour

Won't you come down, Philo?

Philo

No. It's livelier for me up here. More to think about. But don't worry about me, doctor. I know this is the end. If I can't convince you, then all the world must think it hallucination.

Seymour

I'm not unconvinced. I simply don't know. And I'm deeply interested. But you can't stand it, Philo. Get out of this. Be young. This is for older heads. You'll have plenty of time. Get out—do anything. Fall in love—fall in love—that will give you mysteries enough for a while. Yes, I mean it—and don't forget, my dear boy, that you've interested me.

(*Shakes hands with PHILO and goes down.*)

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

PHILO *listens until he has reached the foot of the stairs.*)

Philo

The heavens open—the suns speak—and he is—interested! (*Closes door.*) Alone! . . . Fall in love! Light the candle and put out the stars! . . . (*Returns to his instrument.*) . . . It is still.

(*Steps are heard on the stairs, then a knock at the door. He crosses softly to door and shoots the bolt.*)

Voice (without)

It's Reba, Philo! Won't you let me in?

(*He is silent, and steps retreat.*)

Philo (crossing to centre)

Reba! That folly's done with, thank God! . . . (*Begins walking.*) Seymour. . . . I didn't know how much I was hoping from him. . . . It is hard, hard to go on alone. But I *must*! I can't turn back from that call. When a child cries we turn, and listen, and help. And this—*this* is the voice of a world!

(*A knock is heard at door.*)

Voice of WARNER

Philo!

Philo

Buzz, buzz, old bee!

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

Voice

Come down, son!

Philo

Please leave me alone, father. I can't bear anything more to-night.

(A pause, and WARNER goes down.)

Philo (coming to table)

I will work—work—work! (*Busies his hands.*)
Not a voice to help me—not a smile of hope—not
a touch of sympathy. (*Sits still and despairing.*)
. . . Perhaps the time is not ripe for larger
knowledge. Nature and the Divinity that guides
her must protect their new evolving creatures. A
too sudden revelation and they might perish from
sheer wonder. . . . Yes, truth must come soft-
tened, as a dream, to the man child's brain. Its
naked light would sere and blind him forever. . . .
But to me it has been given to see—to hear—and
keep sane in the light. Oh, from what planet is
the call? From what one of the hundred million
spheres? How many centuries has it been sent
outward to the deaf, the dumb, and the blind?
And what is the word? Is it Hail? Help?
Hope? . . . Or is it an answer? An answer to
some signal of mine? How shall I know? . . .
How shall I know?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

(There is a noise outside the window. PHILO does not look up. REBA appears and leaps lightly through the windows. Advances centre. Her dress is of clinging black, relieved by a floating scarf of cloudy white. She has a mass of blonde hair, and all the charms properly belonging to her age, which is eighteen.)

Reba

Philo!

Philo (turning)

Reba!

Reba

Don't be angry.

Philo

How did you get here?

Reba

The window. Don't you remember—you showed me how to climb up once—with a ladder—the tree—and the shed roof? Oh, the things you've forgotten, Philo!

(He goes to door and unbolts it.)

Philo

You must go down, Reba. *(She does not move.)*
What will mother say?

Reba (laughing)

She held the ladder for me.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Philo

Mother?

Reba

You've frightened her so. You mustn't bolt the door again. She's afraid you'll do something dreadful.

Philo

You were not afraid to come.

Reba

I like to take risks. Life's dull in this village.

Philo

How you've changed, Reba!

Reba

It's taken you long enough to find it out. I've been back a month.

Philo

You'd better go down. I'm very busy, and I've had a long interruption this evening.

Reba

I'm going to interrupt some more. Dr. Seymour says it's good for you.

Philo (angrily)

Dr. Seymour knows you've come?

Reba

Yes. He said you might like the surprise. Don't you like it, Philo?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

(Comes near him. PHILO turns away and busies himself about the table and shelves as if he meant to ignore her utterly. REBA watches him, then goes to window and takes a large apple from the ledge. Comes back.)

Reba

I brought you an apple—such a love of an apple. There's a whole summer of sunsets in it. I climbed the tree myself.

Philo (not looking)

Thank you; I don't eat.

Reba

Don't eat! Well, there it is! *(Throws it on the table. He jumps to protect his instrument.)* You can lick it when you're hungry!

(He sits down and begins to work. She walks to other side of table and picks up a book.)

Reba

Oh! Our old "Swiss Family Robinson"! The very one we read together! With our names in it! You've kept it all the time! *(Hugging it.)* Dear old book! *(Turns the leaves.)* Why—the leaves are half gone!

Philo

They're handy for cleaning my wires.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

(She throws the book down, and stands uncertain.)

Philo

Going, Reba? Good night!

Reba

No, I'm not going. This is my last chance. You'll bar the window to-morrow.

Philo (determinedly)

Yes, I will.

(He bends closely over his work. She lies across the table opposite, watching his movements intently. He fumbles for a tool.)

Reba

The little one? Here it is!

(Hands him a small wire tool. He stares at her face so near his own, then takes the instrument and works confusedly. Jumps up and tries to reach a jar on one of the shelves. REBA leaps onto a chair, takes the jar and hands it down. He stares, and takes jar.)

Reba (as he returns to table)

Ugh! These jars are so dirty, Philo. May I wash them for you?

Philo

Heavens, no!

Reba

Oh, *that* makes you sit up! *(Hums a little,*

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

leaps down and begins to move the things on the table.) I'll make the table tidy for you, Philo.

Philo (grabbing her hands)

Stop!

Reba (sings, swinging his hands across the table)

"All around the mulberry bush——"

Philo

Let go!

Reba

Why, you're holding *me*!

(He drops her hands and goes to window, as if intending flight. She becomes subtle.)

Reba

Dr. Seymour says you've done something wonderful, Philo. Won't you show me your machine?

Philo

No.

Reba

But I *care*! I care more than anybody! I *want* you to be great. I could sit by you all my life just watching you being great. (*PHILO smiles. She twirls over to him.*) And I don't *like* to be still, either.

Philo

But suppose people began to laugh at you as they do at me?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Reba

I wouldn't care. Show me the machine, Philo.

(Takes his arm and they move back to table.)

Philo

There it is.

Reba (hovering over it)

This is it. *(Throwing her head back.)* Tell me about it.

Philo

Reba—your throat is—so white.

Reba (bending suddenly over machine)

There's something moving.

Philo

So white.

Reba

Two—one—two, three——

(PHILO goes to door and flings it open.)

Philo

Reba, go down!

(She crosses to door, shuts it, and stands with her back against it.)

Reba

Not till we've had a talk, Philo. I've a right to it after what you said two years ago—when I went away to school. Have you forgotten it? Shall I tell you what you said?

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

Philo

No!

Reba

You said you loved me, Philo. And I believed it for two years. When I came back you were silent. I've tried to make you speak—I've got in your way—I've done everything nice girls don't do—because—I love you as much as you love *that!* (*Waves her hand toward the machine.*)

Philo

Don't say it. It can't be true. No woman could love so much as that. (*Goes back to table.*)

Reba (following him)

I don't ask you to love me. But let me come here and sit by you sometimes. I could be happy then—though I don't *like* to be still. I was going to a dance to-night.

Philo

A dance!

Reba

But I knew you were up here alone—and I had heard—oh, my dear!—that they were going to send you away. I couldn't bear it. I *had* to come. Oh, Philo, they shall not send you away! Dr. Seymour says all you need is a new interest.

Philo

To dance, perhaps!

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Reba

Well—why not? It is fun. We were to be in fancy dress, and I was going as Night. See—(*waving her scarf*) this is my cloud—and my hair is the moon! I washed it to-day so it would be fluffy. Just see how soft it is!

Philo (touching her hair)

How fine! Will you give me a lock, Reba?

Reba

Oh, yes! Where are your scissors? Here! (*Takes scissors from table.*) You cut it, Philo. (*He takes scissors.*) Anywhere. It's curly at the neck and temples.

Philo (cutting lock)

I don't want a curl. (*Puts hair carefully in table drawer.*) I'm making a new machine and I need long hairs for some of the parts.

Reba (raging)

You sha'n't have it! You sha'n't!

(*Tries to open drawer. They struggle. She gets her arms about his neck.*)

Philo (pushing her off)

Your throat——

(*Kisses it. She clings to him, and he sits down, holding her on his knee.*)

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

Reba

I knew! I knew! Oh, Philo, you *haven't* forgotten! You remember—everything!

Philo

Everything!

Reba

That day we went fishing and——

Philo (laughing)

Forgot the tackle!

Reba

And that last evening in the orchard, when you said——

Philo

I love you!

Reba

Oh, you look just as you did then—so happy! I nearly died when I came home and saw the change in your face. It seemed to shut me out, like a great iron door. Philo. . . . You won't forget again?

Philo

Never!

Reba

And I may come every day?

Philo

Every day!

Reba

I'll help you, Philo. I'll give you all my hair.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

(*Lays her head on his shoulder.*) And I'll let you work and not think of me at all. You can live with your stars——

Philo (kissing her)

There are no stars!

Reba (laughing)

I'll never be jealous again! (*Gets up.*) Come! Let's see what the dinky thing is doing!

(*Goes to table. PHILO watches her, slowly repeating her name.*)

Reba

What a little thing it is! And—there *is* something fluttering!

(*PHILO crosses, still seeing nothing but the girl.*)

Reba

See—I'm trying to count—two—three——

(*He looks down, and becomes transfixed.*)

Philo

Oh, my God! They've changed the signal! . . . Look, Reba! Count the beats! Count for me! Count!

Reba (confused)

Two—three—no, four——

Philo

Can't you *count*? Get away! (*Pushes her*

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

aside.) Two—three—four—three— They have *changed* it! Oh, I must answer!

Reba

Philo——

Philo

Go down!

Reba (clinging to him)

I won't—I won't——

Philo (putting her in a chair)

Sit there, then. And for God's sake be still!
(*Returns to machine and counts under his breath.*)
It is true—it is true—and I am not ready! I am dumb, like all the world! I cannot let them know! (*Walks the floor, muttering*) But I will—I must. (*Crosses to window.*) I must do it!—think of nothing else—nothing! I shall not sleep till it is done! . . . But they will call me mad—lock me up before I have finished, God, before I have finished!

Reba

Philo, listen!

Philo

It's the world's way . . . to beat the spirit down . . . the eager spirit, superbly sane, daring to pierce the barriers between heaven and earth!

Reba

I'll not sit here! (*She sits nevertheless.*)

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDLEAF

Philo

Oh, Truth-driven martyrs, seers of visions,
prophets of the old world and the new, born out
of your time to suffer by fire, by sword, and prison
bars!

Reba (cooingly)

Dear Philo!

Philo

I too shall join you! Forerunners of the waking
spirit of the world!

(REBA gets before him as he walks. Completely absorbed, he puts her aside, absently but gently, as if she were a kitten he did not wish to hurt.)

Philo

I must finish it—I must—before they beat me
down! *(Pauses by machine.)* There is no one
but me to do it. If I fail they may have to wait
another million years—out there—working, wait-
ing. *(Resumes walk.)* I shall not fail. I have
gone too far. God will take my part now. Be
it His own eternal sign, I will answer it!

Reba

I'll make you see me!

(Runs to table, leaps upon it and begins a dance among the wires and bottles. He is stunned

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

for a moment, then rushes to her, seizes her waist with both hands, lifts her up, and flings her to a chair.)

Philo

Sit there, you dragon-fly! Or I'll crush you!
(*Goes to window, as if for breath and air. Recovers poise.*) Let them think me mad. Up here I shall work it out. And I shall not be alone. Earth will not hear me, but the heavens will listen. (*Holds his hands toward the stars.*) My only friends!

Reba

Crush me! (*She steals up to the table, seizes a large book, and brings it down with utter destruction upon his machine. PHILO turns and sees. They face each other. She shrinks, terrified.*) Don't, Philo! (*Kneels, throwing back her head, showing the long line of her throat.*) Forgive me! It was driving you mad! I wanted to save you! Don't look like that! Forgive me, Philo!

Philo

Your throat—is—so white!

(*Seizes and chokes her. As he seizes her she gives a cry of terror. WARNER, MRS. W., SEYMOUR, and BELLWS rush up the stairs and enter. PHILO takes his hands from the*

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

girl's throat and stands apart. She lies motionless.)

Warner (roaring)

You've managed, Mary Ann!

Bellows (excitedly)

Who's right, now, Seymour?

(SEYMOUR bends over REBA, listening for her heart-beat.)

Warner (choking)

A hanging in the family!

Mrs. W.

Is she—dead?

Seymour

No. It is chiefly fear. (*Works over her body.*)

Philo (to himself)

Poor little bird! Poor little bird!

Bellows (taking a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and offering them to WARNER)

Better clap these on him. We're none of us safe.

Philo

Handcuffs, doctor? I'll make no trouble.

(*Holds out his hands and BELLWS fastens handcuffs.*)

Bellows

It's for your own good, Philo.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

Seymour

Our mistake—our mistake! Poor boy!

Bellows

Poor *girl*, I should say!

Seymour (lifting REBA)

I'll take her down-stairs. (*Carries her to door.*)

I shall need you, Mrs. Warner.

(*MRS. W. follows, weeping and looking back at PHILO.*)

Philo

I'm all right, mother.

Mrs. W.

All right. Oh, God help him! (*Exit.*)

Bellows

Clean mad!

Philo (crosses, and looks down on the wreck of his machine)

Silent . . . but I have heard! The divine whisper has reached me!

Bellows

That's still on his mind, you see. Better leave him up here till morning. Seymour and I will fix up the papers and take him off to-morrow. I'm sorry, Philo, but you know it's for the best.

Philo

I'll make no trouble. Don't worry, doctor.

THE FLUTTER OF THE GOLDFLEAF

Bellows (to himself, going)

Lord, he's cool! (*Advising WARNER, in cautiously lowered tone.*) That's the way with the worst of them. (*Exit.*)

Warner

Want me to stay with you, Philo?

Philo

No, father.

Warner (relieved)

Good night, son. (*At door.*) Mother'll send up some blankets. (*Exit.*)

Philo

Blankets!

(CURTAIN)

THE JOURNEY

BY

OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

CHARACTERS

PRINCESS WONG FE, *bride of Yu Tai Shun*

SO SIU, *her friend*

PRINCE CHING

MAKURO, *of Japan*

YU TAI SHUN, *of all nations*

THE JOURNEY

SCENE: *Room in a farmhouse above Siangtan, where the Siang flows among hills. The rear of room has wide exit to a porch, beyond which show the tops of pear and peach trees in full bloom. Steps lead down to the orchard, and the orchard slopes to the river.*

WONG FE and SO SIU *present.*

Wong Fe

My lily So Siu, has not the dishonorable color left my wretched cheeks? Is not my face like the dough before it goes into the oven?

So Siu

Oh, my golden Fe, pearls in the dawn are no fairer!

Wong Fe

But these cow-girl's tatters! Would not my gown of meadow-green mist with the peach-gold underrobe make me less haggard?

So Siu

When your lord, Yu Tai Shun, returns from the hills he will say——

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

Oh, what will he say?

So Siu

That the fairies have been your friends. They wove for you this robe of rose-leaves, and threw over you a gray cloud from the Witch's Mountain.

(WONG FE trips gaily, then with sudden surrender begins to weep.)

So Siu

Have no shame, beloved of miserable So Siu. Water must follow the fire. I am only a maid, but I know that when the honeymoon is without tears two pigs have married. Ah, wet my sleeve, my dear one, and not thine that will lie on the neck of the golden lord, Yu Tai Shun.

Wong Fe

When I awoke this morning the sunlight was on my pillow, but Yu Tai Shun was gone. All day I have not seen his face. And now the last swallow has left the sky.

So Siu

Why did Prince Ching and the young Japanese choose this day to be guests of Yu Tai Shun? It is sad for the wife when the friends of her lord find her alone. Yu Tai Shun will beat his doorstep for not calling him.

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

He will! Prince Ching is almost his father.
May his age climb as the hills, always nearer the
sky!

So Siu

Indeed, you would be sitting alone in a cloud
of sighs, not fast wedded to the bringer of dawn,
Yu Tai Shun, if Prince Ching had not won his
way to your brothers, the mighty princes, Wong
Li and Wong Sen.

Wong Fe

I kiss his honorable dust! He shall live with
my ancestors! And Makuro, the young Japa-
nese, I shall love him too, for he is most dear to
Yu Tai Shun. Do they still sit in the orchard?

So Siu

They have not moved, nor paused in their talk-
ing. Do you not hear? Like bees that cannot
choose their flower. It may be that they have
brought news to Yu Tai Shun, and his gloom will
pass.

Wong Fe

No, I feel it was their coming, like a far cloud,
that shadowed him. Oh, my So Siu, it will be
darker now!

So Siu

I have sent tea and cakes to the orchard.

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

It shall not be dark. Do not the fairies of the sun weave a white world out of the threads of midnight? I will pray to them. We must be merry, my lily So Siu.

So Siu

And why not?

Wong Fe

I shall dance to-night before Yu Tai Shun. (*Tripping.*) Is it not good to have feet? My honorable and glorious mamma weeps when I dance, but it is because she was born too soon and they crippled her beloved feet.

So Siu

How glad I am that the old world is gone when only the painted flower-girls could do the happy things!

Wong Fe

And it was my own lord, Yu Tai Shun, who made the earth new again!

(*She listens, suddenly still.*)

So Siu

He is here!

Wong Fe

My darling So Siu.

So Siu

I go! (*Darts from room, right.*)

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

I would be dancing, but I cannot move. There are anchors of fear on my toes.

(Enter YU TAI SHUN, left. He is dressed in gray flannels, of American pattern.)

Shun (stopping before WONG FE)

I left a witch-cloud on the hills, and it has dropped down before me.

(She courtesies to the floor. He snatches her up.)

Shun

No! I want my Western bride to-night.

Wong Fe

But this is a Chinese orchard, and it is spring-time. Let me worship a little.

Shun

Never, my mountain bird!

(Draws her to the steps, where they sit.)

Wong Fe

You are weary, beloved?

Shun

Not now. I have my rest. To-morrow you shall go with me.

Wong Fe

Up the mountain?

THE JOURNEY

Shun

I will show you where I dropped the storm in my heart.

Wong Fe (timidly)

Will it come again, Yu Tai Shun?

Shun

Nothing can wake it again.

Wong Fe

Then indeed I am your bride!

Shun

Heart of my body art thou, Wong Fe!

(Holds her to his breast a moment, looking distantly out. Suddenly sees his friends approaching.)

Shun

We have guests?

Wong Fe (quickly springing up)

Forgive me! Your friends are here. Prince Ching, and Makuro, from Japan.

Shun

Makuro?

(He throws up his right hand. In a moment PRINCE CHING and MAKURO are seen advancing from the orchard.)

Wong Fe

They have had my welcome. I leave you.
(Crosses to right, reluctantly.)

THE JOURNEY

Shun

Return to us soon, my gold of the morning.

(*She goes out. CHING and the Japanese enter.*)

Ching

We have waited, Yu Tai Shun. We knew that the setting sun would turn a bridegroom home.

Makuro

Master !

Shun

My friend ! What brings you to China ?

Makuro (with steady gaze)

You know. I have come for you.

Shun (stubbornly, as if chidden)

My work is done. China is free.

Ching

Her slavery is only beginning. You may hide your body but you cannot bury your mind under peach-blossoms.

Shun

The republic is established.

Ching

But not a democracy.

Shun

My work is done. Twenty years have I given to the cause of the people. Now until I die I will toil and sing in the fields of my fathers.

THE JOURNEY

(They have gradually come to centre of room, which servants have lighted. WONG FE silently returns, but at a sign from CHING she retreats and remains by wall, right, participating in the scene that follows, though YU TAI SHUN and MAKURO are unaware of her presence.)

Makuro

Do you remember when I stood here once before, Yu Tai Shun?

Shun

Can you ask me that, Makuro?

Makuro

Why not, when you seem to have forgotten all that passed between us? I went from that meeting with an imperishable fire in my heart. I return, and the light that kindled mine is dark. We stood here, and the words you spoke were brighter than the lamps of Siangtan that we looked down upon. Shall I repeat them, Yu Tai Shun?

(Shun is silent.)

Ching

I would hear them, Makuro.

Makuro

The master said: "Forty centuries has China been content to plough, to sow, to reap, and with

THE JOURNEY

her harvest support one-quarter of the human lives on our planet. Drudgery has been her lot, frugality her virtue. Only so had she lease of breath. Now she is to unlock her mines, build ships, and roads of commerce, and with the magic of machinery set her people free. If that magic is owned by a few, there will be no freedom, but a slavery whose agony no man can tell. Every owner will be a monarch greater than the Son of Heaven to whom we bowed. We cannot shut them out by war. We can do it solely by making China a true democracy where the people themselves own the magic tools and the great ways to the markets. To do this is the work of all who love Freedom, and I know no other goddess." Were these your words, Yu Tai Shun?

Shun

Yes . . . my words.

Makuro

That was five years ago. From all parts of the earth come powers fulfilling your fear. Leagued with our own purblind princes and dwellers in the dusk, they hover over China, waiting for war and bribery to dismember her. And you say your work is done. Yu Tai Shun, where have you buried my master?

THE JOURNEY

Ching

In the heart of the Princess Wong Fe.

Shun (rallying)

May we not be too stern in our judgment of the lords of steam and iron? Lei Kung Sang and the British minister of the So-nan mineral beds have built houses for the people.

Ching

And have taken their land. Men who plucked their own fruit, and took food from their own gardens, now cannot eat until they have torn new treasure out of the earth for the kind Briton and the good Lei Kung Sang.

Shun

Their days of work were always long and weary.

Ching

But they toiled as free men in the sun, and as free men sang from the river-boats when the moon rose. In America, where there is still much land and few people, there are places where children go down into the mines and never see the sun except on the day they call "holy." How will it be with China's four hundred millions, when there are not even waste places where those who would flee may gather? For even her great untilled spaces are being covered by the foreign hand.

THE JOURNEY

Makuro

Slavery will be born again with depths the ancients never knew.

Shun

But the spirit of brotherhood is growing.

Makuro

Power has no brothers! It was you who taught me that, Yu Tai Shun.

Shun

Do you forget that we built our republic with the aid of these same princes of power?

Ching

We forget nothing. They let us beat down the throne because they could not use it—a rigid tradition—but the republic—*they* are the republic!

Shun

Can we not trust a little? In our greatest need, alien hands have reached out to help us. And we have true hearts among our Chinese lords. Not all have joined with the invader to herd the people into slave-yards. Pei Chen-Ping and Sa Yi are most liberal. You, Prince Ching, and those you gather to you, have hearts like the rising sun. And the noble princes of the house of Wong—have they not given me my bride?

THE JOURNEY

Ching

Ay, when your sighs had blown around the world for seven years, they yielded her. You were a power to be checked, and they set a woman in your path.

Shun

No!

Ching

It was a Japanese from the Fushun collieries, a Russian prince of the Northern railways, a French buyer of Yunnan copper, a British ship-baron of Hongkong, and the Chinese owners of the un-worked gold veins of Szechuan, who went to the brothers of Wong Fe and said: "Give Yu Tai Shun his bride."

Shun

It was you who spoke for me!

Ching

You had no father, and in my heart you were my son. I spoke for you because I believed in you. I did not think that any bribe could lure you from us. Yours was a soul that we thought would be a torch to every nation of earth. And you choose to go out like a candle in the breath of a woman.

(YU TAI SHUN *is bowed and silent.* MAKURO *touches his sleeve.*)

THE JOURNEY

Makuro

Come with us, master.

Ching

In half an hour the boat will stop at the orchard pier for Makuro. He starts for Japan. It is there you are needed.

Makuro

I come from our friends with their summons. Japan's oligarchy of traders, with every means known to power—school, religion, racial pride and hate—is fostering the spirit of war. All the seeds of the jungle are being deliberately sown once more in men's hearts. They are preparing Japan to hold the largest share of an industrially broken China and weld her millions into one instrument of hate against the West.

Shun

A pigmy's dream !

Ching

A dream that will come true if our giants continue to sleep.

Makuro

It is the menace of America that Japan holds before her people till their hearts roll with fear, their brains grow sick with rage. America, who has insulted us with exclusion—who has snatched

THE JOURNEY

an island chain from our Eastern waters, and shot, starved, imprisoned thousands ignorant enough and brave enough to resist her. *That* is the America my people are taught to believe in. But you know a different America, where people love honor and hate war—whose religion is love thy neighbor as thyself. Come, teach them of that America! You are known in a million homes of Japan. You have taught us to love you, and where we love, we listen.

Shun (with great effort)

I cannot go. If I part from Wong Fe the blood will leave my veins and flow back to her.

Makuro

Then take her with you.

Shun

You know what this journey means.

Ching

Yes, you must go free. With such a weight you would be useless. I will take Wong Fe to her brothers.

Shun

I shall hold her forever!

Ching

You think joy can last so long? (*To MAKURO, shrugging.*) A boy yet!

THE JOURNEY

Shun

In Japan you have my young scholar, Onoto.
All my knowledge I have given him. In his heart
is my purpose, his eyes hold my vision.

Makuro

Onoto!

Shun

His years are younger, his flame will leap higher.
I am only one who fails you. In every nation
our numbers are growing. Do not fear for hu-
manity. Our brothers are everywhere.

Makuro

You say Onoto?

Shun

He has the gift of the shining word—the word
that draws the heart as a full moon at sea draws
the eye. I can turn my back on the world and
rob it of nothing, for I have given it Onoto.

Ching

How long have you been chirping here like a
cricket under a leaf, with no news from the road-
side?

Shun

It is three weeks to-day since I brought Wong
Fe to the door of my fathers.

Ching

Three weeks! On the very day of your joy
Onoto was thrown into prison.

THE JOURNEY

Shun

They would not dare!

Makuro

They did dare.

Shun

In prison—Onoto!

Makuro

No, he is not now in prison.

Shun

Free?

Makuro

The enmity of the powers was bitter. Everywhere he was sowing the seed of peace. In many a house the ancestral sword was broken at his bidding.

Shun

But he is free?

Makuro

Yesterday (*glances out at the stars*), at this hour, he was shot.

Shun (slowly comprehending)

Then I have been twenty-four hours dead.

(He steps uncertainly out to the little porch.

They gaze at the floor, respecting his grief.

WONG FE makes a motion to follow him.

CHING stops her with a gesture, and she shrinks back. YU TAI SHUN re-enters.)

THE JOURNEY

Shun

Your mercy, friends. (*Crosses left, to exit.*)

Ching

You will go with us now?

Shun (turns and hurls the word)

No!

(*An instant of silence follows his exit, then
WONG FE comes forward.*)

Wong Fe

Peace to your hearts, honorable friends of Yu
Tai Shun! He will depart with you.

Ching

Not yet. We must wait. Invisible chains cannot be broken. But they will disunite of themselves. Then he will come.

Wong Fe

I will send him with you to-night.

Ching

You send him?

Wong Fe

Do you think I will divide his life so that the two halves can bear no fruit? That I will wait until he hates me for that ruin?

Ching (with laughter)

Hates you, oh princess!

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

Wait till I must glean in his heart behind a spent passion?—like a poor widow in the track of a grain-cart?

Ching

The coral of your lips will defeat their command, Wong Fe. Near you he is a dry fagot seized by a flame.

Wong Fe

I tell you he will go! Wait in the orchard until you hear the first whistle of the boat. Then come for him. He will be ready. Go, honorable friends! He is returning.

Ching

It is useless. Your words may bite like winter, but his eyes will see only the Spring morning.

Wong Fe

Go, I beg you, go!

(They pass out down the steps of porch. WONG FE hurries to a small table, opens a lacquered box and takes from it a stiletto, which she hides in the folds of her sleeve. She is dancing as YU TAI SHUN enters, and sings as she dances.)

The thousand odors of Spring
Are the thousand arms of love.

THE JOURNEY

They find thee in the valleys,
On the crest of the hills they reach thee;
Till Spring bear no fragrance
Thou canst not escape them,
The thousand arms of love !

The orchard pool is a pillow,
A pillow for the twin lotus,
And the wings of the flying geese
Are warm in the air of heaven;
They drop to the shadowy lake-sedge,
For sweet looks the earth from the roads of the sky,
And in heaven are no cool grasses.

Ever listening
Are the leaves of the slim dryanda,
Whose heart is the harp of the Spring-wind.
A dryanda-tree is my lover,
And my thoughts are the leaves that listen.
Autumn, Autumn, touch not my leaf-thoughts !
Cast them not down when the pool is grey,
And the teal no more sail two and two
With their breasts above one shadow.

Shun

Come to me, Wong Fe ! I feel that you have
blown through my door like a rose petal, and will

THE JOURNEY

drift away again, leaving me not a footprint to kiss.

Wong Fe

Neither in life nor in death shall I leave you, my lord. Though I seem to die, and these graces that please you fall to earth like willow-blossoms, it is not I that will lie on the sand.

Shun

Why do you speak of death, Wong Fe?

Wong Fe

Because I am so happy. The sages say that we can have no fairer fortune than to die in our happiest moment.

Shun

Do not speak of death. The word blisters the air, though your lips be as two drops of June rain.

Wong Fe

But how sweet to die when I am fairest in your eyes! Every year, at this time, you would walk down the peach-flower lanes and recall the glow of my cheek. Oh, Heaven, let me not be a faded wife in the blooming time of the year!

Shun

Thy soul, Wong Fe, is the flower of my worship.

Wong Fe

And death would give my soul wholly to you.

THE JOURNEY

I should be near you always. Then morning would not call you to the peaks, leaving me behind in the tear-dew.

Shun

To-morrow we shall go together. Your shadow will be with mine on the rocks, and under the fir-trees we shall forget the valley.

Wong Fe

And the world? Oh, my lord, there are distances farther than the peaks of Siang, and they will call you from me. It cannot be that you who have known all lands will be content with one. I would see the strange people you have made your brothers, would listen to their dreams, and read the future with their hearts. There are dangers you would not let my body share—I do not ask that—but my soul, you could forbid it nothing.

Shun

What have you heard? What has Makuro said to you?

Wong Fe

What should he say but that the cakes were good, and the tea had the flavor of the fields of Hunan?

Shun

We must join our friends. Where do they wait?

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

They listen for the boat that will stop at the foot of the orchard. Why do they go? Old friends should not be so brief in greeting. Could they not stay one night?

Shun

No—no. (*Sits down.*) They must go.

Wong Fe (laying her hand on his shoulder)

What voice dost thou hear, and wilt not answer?

Shun

Nothing—nothing.

Wong Fe

You will not long be deaf between the beating of our two hearts. You will hear and go. That is why I long for the death-fairy to come in my hour of happiness. You have joined with strong men to lift a heavy yoke from the world. My smiles cannot feed your spirit. Go with your friends. Let the whistle of the boat part us.

Shun

The cassia-tree may draw itself from earth, and walk on feet of roots through the world, but I cannot divide my days from yours, for you are myself, Wong Fe.

Wong Fe (resigned)

I believe you, my lord. We shall not part.

THE JOURNEY

But what joy it would be to die now in your presence, while the love-cup is full! Oh, I could not meet death alone! You know the poor ghost in the song who died in the absence of her lover? She is always pleading to be allowed to die again when his arms may be around her. So would my ghost go wailing if I lost your kiss in death. (*Touches his cheek.*) Is that a tear, Yu Tai Shun? I torture you because I am so happy! You shall laugh, my prince! I know a new game we shall play. Little So Siu taught it to me to-day. She says it is an American game. We call it "Guess behind you!" You turn your back—like that—and you must tell me what I am doing. When you miss three times, then I shall tell you what you must pay. Now—what is it I do?

Shun

You throw me a kiss.

Wong Fe

So I do! And now, my soul's light?

(*Takes stiletto from her sleeve. The whistle of the boat is heard. He turns. She hides stiletto.*)

Shun

Our friends are going.

THE JOURNEY

Wong Fe

But wait—there is time. You must guess once more! Oh, you are slow as ten turns of a river! There!

(Turns his head with her hands, then snatches the stiletto, stabs herself and falls. He turns, kneels dazedly, and takes her in his arms as she dies. CHING and MAKURO enter.)

Ching

The boat— *(Stops in consternation.)*

Makuro (softly)

Master, I did not ask this price.

Shun (rising)

It is paid.

(CURTAIN)

EVERYCHILD
A PLAY OR PAGEANT
BY
FREDERICK PETERSON
AND
OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

- Scene I.* *The Garden of Joy*
Cho-Cho The Clown
Everychild
Mother, Father, and dancing children
- Scene II.* *Sweat-shop*
Father, Mother, three children, Every-
child
- Scene III.* *The Farmstead*
Jim the Father, Mary the Mother,
Billie, Tom, and Rosie, their chil-
dren. Cho-Cho and Everychild
- Scene IV.* *The Coal-mine*
Joe, Jack, Bert—three old miners and
two boys
- Final Scene.* *Same as first scene*
Cho-Cho, Everychild, Mother, Father.
Old group of children and new group
with Everychild

PROLOGUE

BY CHO-CHO

Good people !
This is the Play of Everychild
With Cho-Cho
As Author and Manager.
The play has defects—
It has good points—
And bad points—
Like the world itself—
Like life !
Perhaps the author of the world
Is something like me,
A little grotesque,
A little whimsical,
Serious often,
Sometimes all the more serious
Seen through a Fool's words
With cap and jingle of bells.
In this droll world
There are lots of children
Who are the children of fools—
Like me.

EVERYCHILD

Good people !
I bespeak your patience
With Everychild
Daughter of a Clown.

EVERYCHILD

SCENE I: *Stage dark as curtain rises. Moderate starlight and quiet music of cradle-song type. Little fairies come out dancing in the darkness with firefly lamps and sing the following cradle song :*

Some one is sleeping
Out in the dark
Where fireflies glimmer
Spark upon spark.

Some little stranger
Come from afar
Under the glory
Of moon and of star.

Deep in the blossoms
That drift as they fall
Some one is sleeping
And stirs not at all.

Sleep, little stranger !
The night is near gone;
Sleep, little stranger,
But dream of the dawn !

EVERYCHILD

The dim light reveals a dark figure lying on the mosses at the foot of an old tree. As the light grows gradually stronger the dark object begins to move, to slowly take off one after another of black coverings, revealing a little girl of nine or ten years, dressed in white. She rubs her eyes, looks about wonderingly, and slowly rises to a standing position. Meanwhile the earth grows more luminous and roseate. The birds have begun to twitter now and then before the dawn, and their notes increase in number and variety with the approach of morning. The growing light reveals an orchard of old apple-trees near at hand in full bloom, with petals falling, and hills and mountains lifting and towering upward higher and higher into the blue distance. A path leads from the orchard up the near hills and toward the heights. The music has grown louder, and is sweet and tender, interspersed with bird notes. A number of children, girls and boys, come out and sing and dance under the blossoms of the apple-trees. They sing the children's song :

We are of the sunrise
Flower-breath and dew,

EVERYCHILD

Travelling wider circles
Of blue beyond the blue,

Seeking strength of spirit,
Happiness and joy—
Heritage decreed for
Every girl and boy.

Music of the moonbeams
And the orchard rain,
Music of the meadows
Waving with the grain,

Mountains in the sunlight,
Colors of the flowers,
Trailing cloud and shadow—
All of these are ours.

We are of the sunrise
Flower-breath and dew,
Travelling wider circles
Of blue beyond the blue.

The little girl in the foreground looks with wonder and delight at the entrancing spectacle. She has her side to the audience. She raises her arms, listens, rubs her eyes, smiles with joy. She touches the grass, the flowers, the trees,

EVERYCHILD

picks up and smells the falling apple-blossoms. She begins to dance like the other children. One of them sees her and runs toward her with arms outstretched. The newcomer touches her hair and her hands. They smile at each other. The little girl leads the stranger toward the others and has her join in the dance. The dancing is in the Greek manner. They play with a light, large, bubble-like balloon.

Little Girl

What is your name?

Stranger

I do not understand.

Little Girl

Oh, of course, I forgot. I will lead you to some one who will give you a name.

(A man and woman have come slowly through the orchard and seated themselves on a bench under an apple-tree. Two or three of the children lead the stranger up to them.)

Stranger (feeling of the hair and gown of the woman

Who are you?

Woman (smiling)

I am your mother.

EVERYCHILD

*Stranger (feeling of the hair and face
and garments of the man)*

Who are you?

Man

I am your father.

Stranger

What place is this? They told me somewhere—but I have forgotten—that I should die *there* which is being born *here* and come to the earth.

Mother

Yes, this is our world, and I shall give you a name. I shall name you Everychild.

Everychild

Is it always and everywhere so beautiful?

Mother

No, but it should be so, and some day it will be so.

Father

It is a dream we have.

Mother

It will be even more beautiful than this, for we shall go higher, and climb those Morning Mountains. The flowers of the Spirit grow there.

Everychild

And we shall gather them?

Father

Yes, Everychild. Come now, and bring all the

EVERYCHILD

others with you. We will take that path yonder to the hills.

Mother

No, wait! They are not all here. There are some missing. They must all come.

Father

It will be so long to wait. Let us go with these.

Mother (laying her hand on EVERYCHILD's head)

Have we not named her Everychild?

Father

Yes. She must go down and find all who have lost their way. Perhaps some have awakened in the wrong place and are wandering about in the dark jungle of the world. We will wait here till they come.

Mother

Go, Everychild. Find them and bring them all back with you. Take this lamp. (*Hands her a rose-colored lamp, etc.*)

Father

Our lamp?

Mother

Our love!

Father

Take it, Everychild. With this lamp you can find the lost children and bring them all back with you.

EVERYCHILD

Mother

We will wait for them no matter how long.

(EVERYCHILD starts down along a path leading off the stage to the right—the music and singing continue through the whole scene. CHO-CHO appears, right, for a moment and points her path to her saying: “This way, Everychild.”)

(CURTAIN FALLS)

CURTAIN rises revealing

SCENE II: *A squalid room in a city tenement, a miserable stove, a bedraggled bed. Right, a table at which a poorly dressed man and woman are working fast and feverishly. Three children of about four, eight, and ten years sit on a bench, left, sewing as fast as they can, looking tired, depressed, weary. It is evening, the room poorly lit. Noises from the street, street calls, rumbling of vehicles, honk of autos, etc., etc.*

The Younger Child

Ma, can I go to bed? I am so tired and hungry.

Mother

It ain't ten yet. It will be only a few minutes more. The boss is coming early in the morning and we must have the work ready. Now you be

EVERYCHILD

still and keep working. You don't know what a good home you got. Ain't she got a good home, John?

Father

You bet she got a good home, and if you all work now we get the good coffee and bread in the morning and perhaps in a couple a weeks we all go to the movies.

Oldest Child

Gee, I like to see that fairy play what we see once.

(Bell strikes ten.)

Mother

Now, go right to bed, children. It is ten o'clock.

(Takes light and goes with husband into room right. Children undress and scramble into one bed.)

(Street noises all discontinue, back of room opens out on to the orchard and the music of first scene is heard with dancing children. EVERYCHILD comes into the room with her rosy lamp. The three children sit up in bed and rub their eyes. EVERYCHILD glides all about the room and looks at the squalid place in dismay, then goes up and smiles at the children.)

EVERYCHILD

Everychild

You are some of the lost children. How did you get in here? Come with me. I will give you some better clothes and you can dance and sing with all of them.

(They get out of bed and she leads them in wonder and joy out into the orchard.)

(CURTAIN FALLS)

SCENE III: *Plain interior of a farmer's kitchen with farmer's wife busy over stove, and kitchen table set for lunch for two. Adjacent room, left, small bedroom in which lies a pallid thin child in bed with dishes and bottles on little bedside table. Very little light. Curtains to a single window down. Farmer in overalls comes in, looking hot and tired. He throws hat on chair, says "Hullo, Mary, dinner ready?" and proceeds to wash hands and face in a basin on a stool. Then sits down at the table.*

Mary (bringing food from stove and sitting down opposite)

Here we are, Jim. Guess you're ready for something. It takes a man to sprout a patch o' locusts, and you had breakfast by lamplight.

EVERYCHILD

Jim

Some o' them roots seemed as long as from here to the barn.

Mary

But you'll have the best pasture in the county next year.

Jim

What's the good? We rationed our beef steers the way that government chap taught us, and our pigs, and our sheep, and who got the profit?

Mary

A lot more documents came from the government to-day—all about *pigs*. And we haven't got a decent house to live in! If we could only build on that pretty bit of high ground I've had picked out for three years, Rosie would quit havin' these sick spells.

Jim

How is she, mother?

Mary

I b'lieve she's a little better. Jim, have you got any money left from sellin' the car?

Jim

You know we had to pay the interest at the bank first of all, and the rest went for fertilizer.

Mary

I miss the car more on Rosie's account than

EVERYCHILD

mine. She's been cryin' for a ride this morning. I didn't know what to say. And I had to promise her she could go to the picnic if she got well. That'll mean a pretty dress, and hat and shoes.

Jim

I don't know where you'll get 'em then.

Mary

Looks like we ought to be able to give our children a little pleasure. There's poor Billie and Tom don't more'n get home from school an' lay their books down till they have to go to hoein' and pullin' weeds. I don't blame Billie a bit for runnin' away and goin' fishin' last Saturday.

Jim

I don't either, though I had to whip him for it. I can't do without his work and get through.

Mary

Get through? When did we ever get through anyhow? Look at this, Jim. (*Picks up paper and points to paragraph.*) Beef steers sold to-day in Chicago at nine cents a pound. It cost us fourteen cents to raise ours, and we're countin' on makin' things easier by raisin' more next year. And see here, it says *beef* went *up* in the Eastern market four cents.

EVERYCHILD

Jim

Steers down, beef up! Robbin' both ways.

(*Enter BILLIE and TOM with schoolbooks, which they throw down, shouting: "We got a half-holiday!"*)

Billie

The big boys are goin' to play ball. Dad, can't we go watch 'em? (*MARY and JIM look at each other.*)

We ain't seen a ball game this year, and we want to learn to play. They're makin' a little boys' team at school.

Mary

Daddy's workin' awfully hard to-day. He needs you bad to pile brush for him.

Jim

You can't go to-day, boys. Next time——

Billie (hopeless)

Oh, next time! It's always next time.

Mary

Wash up now, and you can have a hot dinner.
(*They wash listlessly.*)

Jim

Mary, I think you'd better telephone for the doctor to come and have a look at Rosie.

EVERYCHILD

Mary (hesitating)

I did—this morning. He said he didn't have time to come out to-day.

Jim

Dr. Lowden?

Mary -

Guess he's tired o' comin' for nothing. You can't blame him.

(JIM hangs his head. A knock at the door.

JIM rises and opens it. CHO-CHO enters giggling and grimacing while the farmer and his wife are speechless with amazement.)

Cho-Cho

You sent for a doctor?

Jim

Yes—but—you—ain't—no doctor.

Cho-Cho

No, I—ain't—no—doctor (*mimicking*), but my daughter is a doctor and here she is now.

(Enter EVERYCHILD disguised as a doctor, with a long black cape hiding her white dress, a pair of goggles over her eyes, a long white beard, a white wig, a man's hat on, a little black bag in her hands.)

EVERYCHILD

Jim (tearing his hair distractedly)

You say that little old man is your daughter and a doctor?

Cho-Cho

That's right—but a new kind of doctor. This is a Health doctor, not a Disease doctor. Present treatment for Health—absent treatment for absence of Health. (*Ha—ha—hee—hee!*) I'll leave the doctor here. (*Goes out.*)

Everychild

Well, well, where is the patient? (*Putting hat on chair.*)

Jim

I must be crazy, but I never seen a doctor like you. You ain't no doctor.

Everychild

Oh, yes I am. I'm a children's specialist. Is she in that room? (*Goes to door and opens it—draws back a little.*) Whew! No air. Lift up that curtain and open the window! (*JIM does it, rather aghast.*) You must show me where you keep your pigs. Don't they get light and air on a day like this? (*Goes toward bed as ROSIE rises up in bed and stares with a smile at the little doctor.*) So this is the little patient. Well! Well! (*Lifts up and looks at the bottles.*) Take these and throw them out.

EVERYCHILD

(Hands them to MARY, who takes them out and returns.) My! My! Pork and potatoes and candy! Of all things! I'll have to make out a diet list later. *(Feels pulse—listens to her chest.)* I think the trouble with you is bad food, bad air, and no light. The trouble is not enough agricultural pamphlets on human live stock, not enough government millions spent on the real thing. Now get up, Rose! Let me see you stand. There, that's good. Now a comb and brush—we'll help this hair a little.

Mary (handing EVERYCHILD a comb and brush)

My hands are so full of work——

Everychild (arranging ROSIE's hair)

Yes, that's better. Now, father, a glass of milk! *(JIM goes into kitchen.)* And mother, open that bag, please.

(While MARY opens bag, JIM returns with glass of milk, which ROSIE drinks.)

Mary

Oh, my!

(Takes out pretty dress, stockings and slippers, which she lifts up, looks at delightedly, and carries to the doctor.)

Rosie

Oh, mother! You did get them!

EVERYCHILD

(EVERYCHILD works fast, slips the gown on the patient with the stockings and slippers, while ROSIE smiles happily, though dazed by the splendor of it.)

Rosie

Are you going to take me to the picnic?

Everychild

Indeed I am! A picnic that will never be over!

Rosie

Are we going to ride? Have we got our car back?

Everychild

Better than that.

Rosie

What is it?

Everychild

You'll see. Maybe you'll dance out of the window.

Mary

Are you going to take her away?

Everychild

Yes, I shall keep her with me until she is well. Then she will return to you.

(Takes out of the bag the rosy lamp and waves it. Throws aside her cap and pulls off goggles, wig, and beard. The back wall moves away,

EVERYCHILD

revealing the first scene with the same strains of music and the dancing children in the orchard. EVERYCHILD leads ROSIE out to join them. BILLIE and TOM move after them calling: "Let us go with you! Take us with you!"")

Rosie

Oh, please take Billie and Tom!

Everychild

Yes, I want them, too. Come along, boys!

(They shout and run after ROSIE and EVERYCHILD.)

Mary

Oh, Jim, is this a dream? Or am I awake at last?

Jim (putting his hand to his head, dazedly)

Perhaps this is what it ought to be for all the children of the world.

(CURTAIN FALLS)

SCENE IV: *Interior of a coal-mine, lit only by lamps on the heads of three men and two boys, about twelve and fourteen years, the men busy at work getting the coal down with picks, the boys shovelling coal into a car. They work a few minutes. Distant muffled sound of a steam-*

EVERYCHILD

whistle. They immediately drop tools and go to corner and pick up each a can, paper bag, or small basket, and sit down to eat.

One Man

Lunch-time. It feels good to rest half an hour in this bloomin' hole. (*Takes a drink from a bottle he brings from his pocket and hands to another.*) Have a swig, Jack?

Jack

Don't care if I do. (*Takes a swallow.*) I'll bring some next time, Joe.

Joe (passing bottle to the other)

Here, Bert, it helps. Take some and give a swallow to the boys.

Bert

I'll take some and thank you, but I guess the boys are better off without it.

Jack

How long you worked here, Bert?

Bert

Nigh on fifteen years, and a devil's job it is. I wanted to be a sailor, but I got into this, and it paid pretty good, and then I got tangled up with a family and just stayed on the job. But it's no place to spend a life. (*Coughs.*)

EVERYCHILD

Joe

I been here 'bout as long as you, Bert. I ran away from the big woods where my father was a lumberman. Thought I'd see the world, and just got stuck here and never could make up my mind to get away. See the world, eh! All I ever seed was de inside of it. If I had my way to do over again, I think I'd take to the tall timber up dere on top.

(Meantime the two boys, while eating with one hand out of their cans, have been whispering and playing knuckle-bones with pieces of coal, a little way from and behind the men. Suddenly they stop, look around at each other and listen, for they hear the fairy dance music of the first scene, which is not heard by these older men, who go on talking.)

First Boy

Dey's havin' parade up dere.

Second Boy

Dat ain't band music, you mutt.

(FIRST BOY begins to sway as if in time with the music.)

Second Boy

Wot's the matter?

EVERYCHILD

First Boy (sheepish)

Nuthin'. (*Tries to keep still. They both listen.*)
Did yer ever dance, Buck?

Second Boy

Naw. (*Listens.*) But I bet I could!

First Boy

I had a dream onct. I drempt I's in an orchard,
an' they's blooms floatin' round. I could smell
'em!

Second Boy

You's nutty. You can't smell in a dream.

(*They listen, and finally yield to the music,
swaying their bodies, moving their arms, and
beginning to dance as the music goes on.*)

Jack

I've been here fourteen years, since I was a
boy. It ain't a place for a man. It's too black.
You get black outside and inside. Why, they say
your lungs get black from breathing this dust.
And your soul gets black. The place for an honest
man to work is out in the white light, on your
ocean or in your woods, or on the roads and rail-
ways, and in the big buildings. This kind of
work is work with punishment added to it. A
little of it would be all right for men who go wrong,
or for some as needs discipline. Then some day

EVERYCHILD

they'll get machines to do the rest. Ah—there's the whistle. Come on, boys, to work again!

(A whistle sounds and all start to work as before.)

(CURTAIN FALLS)

FINAL SCENE: *Curtain rises on final scene. Same as first, with music as before, and with the mother and father and children among the apple-trees. CHO-CHO appears, right, and says: "Here they come!" EVERYCHILD enters, right, bringing with her a number of children, who follow her and then scatter under the trees.*

Everychild

Oh, mother, I went everywhere, and we've brought all who could come! But there were some in holes in the ground that I couldn't reach, though we danced and danced, and called and called. They were too far down. And there were some ill and crippled, in hospitals, that couldn't walk, and some hidden away in great buildings called factories—and some in tenements, where there was no sun, and no green grass to walk on. Mother, what shall we do? It was so hard to leave them. Won't you go back with me, and help me?

EVERYCHILD

Mother

Yes, Everychild. We must all go. Not one must be left down there.

Father

Yes, we cannot go on up the Morning Mountains until they come.

Mother

We will start at once, all of us, down through the highways and valleys and cities of the world, and bring them here. Come, children, let us go.

(They gather about her and start down, right, singing as they go. CHO-CHO lingers behind for a few moments and pronounces an epilogue.)

EVERYCHILD

EPILOGUE

Not all here yet—
But they must come
To this sunshine—
To these mountains—
To these birds and trees—
To the music—
To the Land of Health,
The Land of Happiness—
They may be gay *there*—
 Sometimes—
 Sometimes—
But *that* is a fool's Paradise—
My old Kingdom—
And I must lead them up
To this new land
Of hope and joy.

(CURTAIN FALLS)

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

BY
FREDERICK PETERSON

CHARACTERS

AKRON

EMPEDOCLES

PANTHEIA

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS*

Akron

She has been dead these thirty days.

Empedocles

How say you, thirty days! and there is no feature of corruption?

Akron

None. She has the marble signature of death writ in her whole fair frame. She lies upon her ivory bed, robed in the soft stuffs of Tyre, as if new-cut from Pentelikon by Phidias, or spread upon the wood by the magic brush of Zeuxis, seeming as much alive as this, no more, no less. There is no beat of heart nor slightest heave of breast.

Empedocles

And have you made the tests of death?

Akron

There is no bleeding to the prick, nor film of breath upon the bronze mirror. They have had the best of the faculty in Akragas, Gela, and Syracuse, all save you; and I am sent by the dazed parents to beseech you to leave for a time the

**Atlantic Monthly*, 1911.

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

affairs of state and the great problems of philosophy, to essay your ancient skill in this strange mystery of life in death and death in life.

Empedocles

I will go with you. Where lies the house?

Akron

Down yonder street of statues, past the Agora, and hard by the new temple that is building to Olympian Zeus. It is the new house of yellow sandstone, three stories in height, with the carved balconies and wrought brazen doors. Pantheia is her name. I lead the way.

Empedocles

The streets are full to-day and dazzling with color. So many carpets hang from the windows, and so many banners are flying! So many white-horsed chariots, and such concourses of dark slaves from every land in the long African crescent of the midland sea, from the pillars of Hercules to ferocious Carthage and beyond to the confines of Egypt and Phœnicia! Ah, I remember now! It is a gala day—the expected visit of Pindar. I am to dine with him to-morrow at the Trireme. We moderns are doing more to celebrate his coming than our fathers did for Æschylus when he was here. I was very young then, but I re-

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

member running with the other boys after him just to touch his soft gown and look into his noble face.

Akron

I have several rolls of his plays, that I keep with some new papyri of Pindar arrived by the last galley from Corinth, in the iron chest inside my office door, along with some less worthy bags of gold of Tarshish and coinage of Athens, Sybaris, Panormos, and Syracuse. Ah, here is the door! It is ajar, and if you will go into the courtyard by the fountain and seat yourself under the palm-trees and azaleas on yon bench, by the statue of the nymph, I will go up to announce your coming.

Empedocles

All is still save for the far, faint step of Akron on the stair, and the still fainter murmur from the streets. The very goldfish in the fountain do not stir, and the long line of slaves against the marble wall, save for their branded foreheads, might be gaunt caryatides hewn in Egyptian wood or carved in ebony and amber. That gaudy tropic bird scarce ruffles a feather. What is the difference between life and death? A voice, a call, some sudden strange or familiar message on old paths, to the consciousness that lies under that

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

apparent unconsciousness, will waken all these semblances of inanimation into new life of arms and fins and wings. Let me try her thus! My grandfather was a pupil of Pythagoras, who had seen many such death-semblances among the peoples of the white sacred mountains of far India. Ha! Akron beckons. I must follow him.

Akron

Enter yon doorway where the white figure lies resplendent with jewels that gleam in the morning sun.

Empedocles

The arm drawn downward by the heavy golden bracelet is cold, yet soft and yielding like a sleep. The face has the natural ease of slumber, and not the rigid artificiality of death. 'Tis true there is no pulse, no beat of heart nor stir of breath, yet neither is there the sombre grotesqueness of the last pose. But the difference between life and death is here so small that it is incommensurable, the point of the mathematicians only. I shall hold this little hand in mine, and, with a hand upon her forehead, call her by name; for, you know, Akron, one's name has a power beyond every other word to reach the closed ears of the imprisoned soul.

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

Pantheia! Pantheia! Pantheia! It is dawn.
Your father calls you. Your mother calls you.
And I call you and command you. Open your
eyes and behold the sun!

Akron

A miracle, oh, Zeus! The eyelids tremble like
flower-petals under the wind of heaven. Was that
a sigh or the swish of wings? Oh, wonder of won-
ders! she breathes—she whispers!

Pantheia

Where am I? Is this death? Some one called
my name. That is the pictured ceiling of my
own room. Surely that is Zaldu, my pet slave,
with big drops on her black face. . . . And father,
mother, kneeling either side. And who are you
with rapt face and star-deep eyes, thick hair with
Delphic wreaths, and in purple gown and golden
girdle? Are you a god?

Empedocles

Be tranquil, child, I am no god, only a physician
come to heal you. You have been ill and sleep-
ing a long time.

Pantheia

Yes, I feel weakness, hunger, and thirst. I re-
member now that I was well, when suddenly a
strange thought came to me on my pillow. I

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

thought that I was dead. This took such possession of me that it shut out every other thought, and being able to think only that one thought, I must have been dead. It seemed but a moment's time when the spell of the thought was broken by an alien deep voice from the void of nothing about me, calling me by name, calling me to wake and see the day. With that came floods of my own old thoughts, like molten streams from Ætna, that were rigid as granite before the word was given that loosed them.

Empedocles

Did you not see new things or new lands or old dead faces, for you have been gone a month? I am curious to know.

Pantheia

How passing strange! No, I saw neither darkness nor light. I heard no sounds, nor was conscious of any silence. I must have had just the one thought that I was dead, but I lost consciousness of that thought. I remember saying good night to Zaldu, and I handed her the quaint doll from Egypt and bade her care for it. Then the thought seized me, and I knew no more. My thoughts which had always run so freely before, like a plashing brook, must have suddenly frozen,

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

as the amber-trader from the Baltic told me one day the rivers do in his far northern home. Oh, sir, are you going so soon?

Empedocles

Yes, child. You must take nourishment now, and talk no more. But I am coming again to see you, for I have many earnest questions still to put regarding this singular adventure.

Akron

Let me walk with you. I will close the great door. Already the gay streets are silent, and the people crowd this way, whispering awe-struck together of the deed of wonder you have done this day. You have called back the dead to life, and they make obeisance to you as you pass, as if you were in truth a son of the immortals. Your name will go down the ages linked with the miracle of Pantheia. You are immortal.

Empedocles

Nay, 'tis not so strange as that, and yet 'tis stranger.

Akron

I would know your meaning better.

Empedocles

The power of a thought, that is the real won-

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

der! We just begin to have glimpses of the effects of the mind upon the body. To me, Akron, the faculty has set too great store upon herbs and bitter drafts, and cupping with the knife. I would fain have the soul acknowledged more, our therapy built on the dual mechanism of mind and substance. For if an idea can lead to the apparent death of the whole body, so might other ideas bring about the apparent death of a part of the body, like, for example, a paralysis of the members, or of the senses of sight, feeling, hearing; and in truth I have seen such things. Or a thought might give rise to a pain, or to a feeling of general illness, or to a feeling of local disorder in some internal organ; and I feel sure I have likewise met with such instances. And if an idea may produce such ailments, then a contrary idea implanted by the physician may heal them. I believe this to be the secret of many of the marvels we see at the temples and shrines of Æsculapius. and of the cures made by the touch of seers and kings.

But this teaching goes much deeper and further. If we could in the schools implant in our youth ideas which were strong enough, we should be able to make of them all, each in proportion to his be-

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

lief in himself and his ambition, great men, great generals, thinkers, poets, a new race of heroes in all lines of human endeavor, who should be able by their united strength of idea and ideal finally to people the world with gods.

I have among my slaves, who work as vintners and olive-gatherers, a physician of Thrace, as also a philosopher of the island of Rhodes, a member of the Pythagorean League. These I bought not long ago from the Etruscan pirates. Every evening I have them come to me on the roof after the evening meal, and there under the quiet of the stars we discuss life and death, the soul and immortality, and all the burning problems of order, harmony, and number in the universe. What surprises me is that this Thracian should be so in advance of the physicians of Hellas, for he holds as I do that the mind should be first considered in the treatment of most disorders of the body, because of its tremendous power to force the healing processes, and because sometimes it actually induces disease and death. And we have talked together of the incalculable value of faith and enthusiasm so applied in the education of the child, this new kind of gardening in the budding soul of mankind, and of what new and august

TWO DOCTORS AT AKRAGAS

racers might thereby come to repeople this rather unsatisfactory globe.

I am minded to free these slaves, indeed all my slaves, and I have the intention of devoting the most of a considerable fortune, both inherited and amassed by me, to the spread of these doctrines and to the public weal, particularly in the matter of planting in the souls of our youth, not the mere ability to read and write Greek and do sums in arithmetic, but the seeds of noble ideas that shall make this Trinacria of ours a still more wonderful human garden than it has been as a granary for the world's practical needs. From this sea-centre we send our freighted galleys to Gades in the West, Carthage in the South, Tyre in the East, and to the red-bearded foresters of the Far North. I would still send on these same routes this food, but also better food than this, stuff that should kindle and feed intellectual fires in all the remote places of the earth.



484739

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

